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A Treasure Trove of Documents

Captured papers provide insights into a declining regime



For more than a week the Administration had tantalized newsmen and members of Congress with hints about what Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam called a "treasure trove"

of captured Grenadian documents that would put to rest any questions about U.S. motives for the invasion. Late last week the State Department finally released 196 pages of its vast stockpile. The documents did not quite represent the "smoking gun" needed to substantiate President Reagan's claim that Grenada was being transformed into a "major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy." But the papers did offer solid evidence that Grenada's Marxist government had grown increasingly reliant on its connections with Cuba, the Soviet Union and North Korea, especially for arms. Together with other documents seen by TIME last week, the State Department's trove portrays a regime obsessed with three problems: the almost total alienation of the Grenadian population, deep divisions within the leadership itself, and counterrevolution.

Five secret arms-delivery agreements, three with the Soviet Union and one each with North Korea and Cuba, show that the government of the late Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was to receive \$25.8 million in Soviet and \$12 million in North Korean military aid. Cuba was to send 27 permanent and a dozen temporary military advisers.

For the most part, the treaties consist of lists of military hardware. Under an agreement signed on Feb. 9, 1981, the Soviet Union promised to ship 5 million rubles (\$7.5 million) worth of arms and equipment to Grenada, including 1,000 submachine guns, 1.3 million rounds of ammunition, five jeeps, a mobile bakery, 12,600 complete infantry uniforms and thousands of pairs of "olive-colored socks." A subsequent agreement, dated July 27, 1982, lists 14 pages of equipment and supplies, including 50 secondhand armored personnel carriers, to be delivered between 1982 and 1985. Moscow also promised to train Grenadian soldiers in the Soviet Union and send specialists to Grenada. In each of its treaties, the Soviets insisted that deliveries be routed

through Cuba, presumably to conceal Moscow's direct connection.

Far more intriguing were the insights into the events that led to Bishop's ouster and assassination. According to a series of mostly handwritten minutes of the Central Committee meetings of Grenada's New Jewel Movement that took place after July, Bishop proposed that the party take a more moderate stance toward the West. The idea was rejected. Warned one unidentified participant: "If the revolution is turned back now, it has

Colo., monthly magazine that specializes in military weapons and tactics; it said the papers had been overlooked by U.S. forces. The documents indicate that Grenada also had military agreements with Viet Nam, Nicaragua and at least one Soviet-bloc country. A top-secret paper dated May 18, 1982, records a shipment of ammunition and explosives that arrived from Czechoslovakia via Cuba. One document, signed last November by Nicaragua's Vice Minister of Defense, provides for the establishment of a course in Grenada to teach English-language military terminology to members of the Nicaraguan army.

Despite the steady stream of equipment deliveries, Grenada appeared to lack military readiness. In particular,

the government seemed plagued by a shortage of spare parts for army vehicles. Bishop sent a letter to Cuba's Defense Minister General Raúl Castro, Fidel's brother, stating that the dearth of Soviet spare parts had rendered 23 out of 27 trucks and eight out of ten jeeps completely immobile. Bishop also complained that the Soviets had shipped to Grenada thousands of combat boots that were too small for the island's troops.

One top-secret Grenadian report, dated April 6, 1983, warned that the CIA was masterminding a counterrevolution out of Trinidad. "The enemy," it says, "is at an advanced stage of preparation, and the main force will be Cuban exiles and mercenaries." The report also singles out one American student on the island for suspicion. "He lives just below the Soviet embassy," it says, "and seems

to pay more than casual attention to all activities of the embassy."

Among the more revealing pieces of correspondence obtained by TIME is a letter from Cuban President Fidel Castro to the New Jewel Movement's Central Committee. Dated Oct. 15, two days after Bishop had been placed under house arrest, the letter appears to be an attempt to save Bishop. "Everything that happened was for us a surprise," wrote Castro. "Even explaining the events to our people will not be easy." With haunting prescience, he predicts that Bishop's overthrow will bring disaster to Grenada. Wrote Castro: "In my opinion, the divisions and problems that have emerged will result in considerable damage to the image of the Grenadian revolution, as much within as outside the country."

—By Susan Tiftl. Reported by
Johanna McGeary/Washington and Christopher
Redman/Boulder

Article 1

The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shall ensure free of charge the delivery in 1981-1983 to the Government of Grenada of special and other equipment in accordance and quantity according to the Annex to the present Agreement to the amount of 5,000,000 roubles.

Description	Unit of Measure	Total Quantity	Years of delivery		
			1981	1982	1983
ARMOR					
BT-60P3 armored personnel carriers	piece	8	8	-	-
BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance and patrol vehicles	piece	2	2	-	-
14.5-mm cartridges:					
with 9-32 bullet	thous. pieces	6,3	6,3	-	-
with BT bullet	thous. pieces	6,3	6,3	-	-
7.62-mm rifle cartridges without clips:					
with steel core bullet					

Strict secrecy and a delivery route through Cuba: an arms treaty with the U.S.S.R.
Revolution gone awry, useless combat boots and a dearth of spare parts.

regional and international implications."

Minutes of other meetings held from Sept. 14 to Sept. 16 showed a party worried about its tenuous hold on Grenadian popular support. "The mood of the masses is characterized at worst by open dissatisfaction and cynicism," said the document, "and at best by serious demoralization." During a meeting on Sept. 28, one participant referred to "the crisis in the party, the atmosphere of confusion." On Oct. 12, the language was heavy with suspicion and paranoia. "There seems to be a mood in the party for blood," one leader is quoted as saying. It was at this session that the Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard and the Central Committee decided to remove Bishop. He was placed under house arrest the next day and executed six days later.

Additional documents were shown to TIME by *Soldier of Fortune*, a Boulder,